

THE OFFICE OF THE MINISTRY TO BE MAGNIFIED.

20

THE SIXTH CHARGE

TO THE

Clergy of the Protestant Episcopal Church,

IN THE

DIOCESE OF DELAWARE.

BY ALFRED LEE,

BISHOP OF DIOCESE OF DELAWARE.

Delivered at the Opening of the Convention of the Diocese, June 7, 1865.

PUBLISHED BY A RULE OF THE CONVENTION.

WILMINGTON:
HENRY ECKEL, PRINTER,
S. E. COR. FIFTH AND MARKET STREETS.
1865.

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MY REV. BRETHREN:

Were I to select a motto for the remarks now respectfully addressed to you, I might cite the familiar passage in Rom. XI: 13. "I MAGNIFY MINE OFFICE."

The context shows that St. Paul does not here refer so much to his office as an inspired apostle of Christ and general overseer of the Church, as to his special charge to preach the gospel to the Gentiles. He would magnify the grace of God which had broken down the wall of partition between his ancient people and the residue of men. He exulted in the thought that the mercies of the New Covenant were not to be confined within a narrow enclosure, but were to be freely extended as the sun-light and the air. While over-flowing with tender sympathy for his countrymen, prejudiced and hostile as they were, and expressing in the very strongest language his earnest desire for their conversion to Christ, he was devoutly thankful for the extension to the heathen of the privileges which Israel so largely spurned. Himself a Hebrew of the Hebrews, he rejoiced greatly that he was commissioned to bear the glad tidings to those who had been aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles I magnify mine office." So that the apostles meaning is very different from that which is sometimes put upon his words. He is honoring not so much apostolic authority as missionary work. He is exulting, not as a ruler of the Church, but as an evangelist to the heathen. It is the wider opening for labour that he prizes, the door of entrance into the regions that were lying in darkness and the shadow of death, the call to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ to those who had been looked upon as outcasts, the opportunity to spend and be spent, to toil and suffer for the unlimited diffusion of the gospel. There certainly is little in this passage to countenance extravagant assumptions in the Christian Ministry.

And yet every earnest recipient of this Ministry must desire that, in a legitimate and Scriptural sense, the office itself be magnified. St. Paul does not hesitate elsewhere strongly to set forth and vindicate its claims. The origin of the Ministry, Christ's own appointment, invests it with exceeding sacredness and importance. To it was particularly entrusted the carrying onward of his great work of redeeming love from the time of his departure to the era of his return. We find the Ministry specified as one of the precious gifts with which he enriched the Church after his

ascension. “When he ascended up on high he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men. And he gave some apostles, and some prophets, and some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers; for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the Ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: till we all come, in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.” No more impressive statement could be presented of the origin and design of our holy office. In the plenitude of his love for a world which he died to redeem, the Saviour bestowed this gift from heaven. And though the treasure be placed in earthen vessels, yet his promised presence and his Holy Spirit compensate for mortal feebleness and inadequacy, and “the excellency of the power is of God and not of us.” It cannot be otherwise than that the proper influence, the reputation, the success of this Ministry should be very dear to all Christians, and especially to those invested with this momentous trust.

As a matter of experience we find the weight and influence for good exerted by the Ministry, at any particular period, to be very intimately connected with the spirit, character, and conduct of those who exercise it. It is no longer confirmed and commended, as in apostolic days, by miracles and supernatural

tokens. It has not now, as in very early times, the honor accruing from ministers being acknowledged heads and representatives of a Church united and comparatively pure, whose holiness and love shone very fair and bright amid Pagan abominations. It lacks the reverence paid in ages of ignorance to those who monopolized the knowledge and intellectual cultivation of the times. It has to compete with general and quickened mental development, with the wide diffusion of knowledge, with utilitarian tendencies measuring the worth of things by material standards, with the disparaging effect of sectarian divisions and strifes, and with the widely extended leaven of unbelief and sensualism. All these elements are adverse to mere official influence. They strip off much of the consequence that under different circumstances surrounded the clerical character. They make its weight depend more and more upon the individual who bears it. The robe does not hide the man. The person is not lost sight of in the ambassador. The office cannot sustain the incumbent. But the incumbent obtains honor for the office or exposes it to contempt.

This state of the public mind we may to a certain extent lament; we may wish that men, for their own sake and for the blessings thence to follow, regarded with greater reverence the institution of Jesus Christ.

But as it is impossible for us to arrest the rising tide or dam up the torrent, it becomes us the more carefully to inquire what is demanded of us by the temper of the times, and the peculiarities of our country and circumstances. Our lot is evidently cast in no ordinary period of the world's history. We live not only in an age of immense activity and development, but in a land where the Providence of God is unfolding one wondrous page after another. To slumber in supine indifference at such a time, is as strange and criminal as was the sleep of the prophet Jonah in the height of the tempest. While the land is vibrating with the earth-quake, it becomes us to wake and watch. While questions of immense magnitude are absorbing the minds of men around us, it becomes us with increased solicitude to inquire "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do!"

In critical public circumstances, it is evidently to be desired that the Christian Ministry be not powerless. Their influence should be recognized and felt. It may be granted them to do an amount of good in a single year of agitation, that could hardly be effected under ordinary circumstances a life-time. And the fact to which I have adverted that it is not upon official prestige they can now rely, renders it all the more urgent that they should study well the demands of their position and gird themselves for the exigency.

The case stands thus: It is all important in a juncture like the present, that the office of Christ's ministers be magnified and not depreciated. Whether it shall be honored or despised depends under God upon the spirit and bearing of those who exercise it. St. Paul says to Timothy, "Let no man despise thee." That is, so quit thyself in thy responsible trust at Ephesus that men may be constrained to respect thy office and thyself. Confute by thy life and exemplary discharge of thy sacred functions the scoffer and the gain-sayer, and compel the esteem and confidence of the community in which thou art placed.

How shall we then, brethren, most truly magnify our office?

It is evident, at the outset, that it is not to be magnified at the present day by excessive assumptions, by large claims of sacerdotal authority, by attempted sway over men's conscience and faith. This has been tried on a vast scale, and in periods of ignorance it succeeded, and vestiges of the superstitious reverence thus obtained for the priesthood still linger in some communions. But such deference is in course of rapid diminution, such pretensions are fast losing their hold. And they produce a natural recoil and disgust. While torpid and darkened minds acquiesce in priestly domination, the vigorous and intelligent rebel, and confounding the abuse with the religion it

professes to maintain, discard at once the corruption and the faith. In countries long oppressed with Romanism, the remnant of belief that lingers in cultivated minds is small indeed. Educated men have almost forsaken the Church, Christianity is renounced with the Confessional, and religion is looked upon as a token of intellectual weakness or an engine of State policy. None of us would desire to revive such unhappy pretensions even were it possible; and we may well be on our guard against theories derived from Rome, or from that age which was ripening into Romish error.

It is not now so much by positive claims and demands that we are to obtain for our holy office regard and reverence, as by the work it accomplishes, and the beneficial influence it exerts. So far as we can make it felt as a power for good, we shall most surely commend it to men's esteem and confidence.

1. I need not say how indispensable to its proper influence is the PERSONAL HOLINESS of those to whom it is entrusted. This is an element of power for which nothing else can be substituted. A blameless and consistent life is universally demanded. Ministerial efficiency and real godliness are not to be separated. The gospel is to be preached by the life as well as by the lips. When once the sincerity and piety of the minister are questioned, his influence for

good is at an end. The salt has lost its savor. The light that should have shone before men, constraining them to glorify our Father in Heaven, is dimmed or quenched.

As genuine faith and love are not to be assumed or counterfeited, the keeping alive and cherishing of devout affections and holy principles is therefore of the first necessity. To be fervent and impressive in the promulgation of our message, the heart must glow with the love of Christ, and the lips be touched with the live coal from the altar. No artificial rules, natural gifts, rhetorical attainments will compensate for a spiritual mind, Heaven-enkindled zeal and singleness of eye. And we must not complain that men compare our doctrines with our lives, and look to us for an exemplification of our principles. In this respect, society is somewhat exacting. It is no uncommon thing to hear men, who openly set at naught the demands of the gospel, strongly condemning the faults and failings of the Ministry. Even many professed Christians seem to forget that there is but one standard of holiness. "Let every one that nameth the name of Christ, depart from iniquity." All who confess the faith of Christ are "a royal priesthood," and are equally bound to glorify God with their bodies and with their spirits, which are God's. It is a great mistake for private Christians to suppose themselves

at liberty to mingle in scenes where they would be surprised and shocked to meet their pastor. But while we expose that gross error which would lay down a different rule of holy living for the shepherd and the flock, which would have the godliness of the priest to make up for the deficiencies of the people ; we must recognize, in the expectation of consistent and blameless conduct in their spiritual guides, an additional incentive to a closer walk with God. Let us aim not to disappoint this feeling. As ensamples to the flock pastors are to exhibit the power of living Christianity. The impression that the ministers of the Lord should be holy in all manner of conversation, is in one aspect a homage paid to the truth and purity of our religion. It is reverenced as heavenly and divine, and therefore even the world expects to see its mark and impress upon those who stand forth as its witnesses and champions. Truly then to commend our office, should be the burden of the life. Daily conduct is to tell with mightier effect even than public duties. As faith grows, usefulness will be enlarged. The closet is to contribute to our influence as certainly as the pulpit. The graces of the Christian character will magnify the office more than eloquence or learning. The brightest lights in the past history of the Church are those who reflected best the Master's image. The mind that was in

Christ Jesus, shining forth in the life, will be the mightiest weapon of our warfare.

That the pastor's life enforce and not hinder the lessons of his lips, requires prudence as well as godliness. The errors and mistakes of good men sometimes have a most disastrous effect; and one unguarded word or act may neutralize the labors of years. We may not hope wholly to avoid censure and blame. Even our good may be evil spoken of. There is a limit beyond which favor is to be dreaded rather than desired. To this point I shall have occasion to return. But in the present connection, I simply refer to this liability as an urgent motive to walk circumspectly, and to abstain from all appearance of evil. How should it impress upon us our need of divine guidance and of the wisdom that is from above. A single false step may counteract the effect of months of painful study and assiduous pastoral duty, may neutralize our sermons and rob our labors of their fruits. And yet how frail and fallible we are! Let this consideration render our prayers more fervent for the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and our application more earnest to Him in whom all fullness dwelleth. "Hold thou me up and I shall be safe."

2. Our office is to be magnified by THE FULL AND FAITHFUL PROCLAMATION OF THE GOSPEL. We shall pro-

cure for it acceptance and influence, by preaching Christ and him crucified. "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful." We cannot expect the smile and benediction of our Master, unless we truly discharge our great embassy. "If any man serve me, him will my father honor." God will honor the faithful servant of his Son, one whose great object is to lift up Christ before dying men, and to point sinners to the Lamb of God, by giving him acceptance with men. There may be apparent temporary exceptions. There may be encountered, in some positions, prejudice that is inflamed and irritated by the honest presentation of the truth as it is in Jesus. Some of the most eminent and faithful preachers of the Cross, have had a large share of odium and opposition. But in the issue has been often witnessed the signal triumph of the gospel, and its true-hearted advocate. This is a point in regard to which we are not to confer with flesh and blood. We must warn the impenitent, deal plainly with self-deceivers, expose the delusions of the self-righteous, show the error and danger of the formalist, and hold up Christ in all his offices of power, love and grace, whether men will hear or forbear. And we may be sure that no Ministry will be ultimately and permanently honored, that does not glorify the Lord Jesus. The Lord our God is a jealous God. His glory

will he not give to another. To substitute any other centre of attraction, any other fountain of grace for the divine Saviour, will entail in the end disappointment and failure. The Ministry that preaches itself, that aims to exalt its own claims and functions, that presents the priest instead of the Saviour, will not in the true Scriptural sense magnify the office. The Ministry that is vehement and excessive in setting forth the Church, that glorifies the body rather than the Head, that directs men to Christ incorporate with the baptized, or offered upon a material altar, rather than to Christ dying on the Cross and pleading at the right-hand of the throne, will not eventually succeed. Jesus must be lifted up that men may be drawn to him, and the kingdom is most widely spread by heralding the grace and glory of the King. We magnify our office when we magnify Jesus Christ. We render the embassy honourable, when we present to all eyes and hearts the Sovereign who is altogether lovely. We promote the growth and welfare of the body by exalting the Head.

The intellectual culture and scientific discoveries of the age have led some prominent men in the Church of England to seek the applause of the world by a pretended advance in knowledge, and more pliant modes of interpreting the Holy Scriptures. It has been assumed that much freedom may be exer-

cised in the reading of the Old Testament, and that the supernatural is to be greatly softened down or explained away. It has been imagined that deference to the opinions and prejudices of sceptical men of science, would recommend Christianity to their acceptance. Never was there a greater mistake. Aside from the dishonesty of wresting the Holy Scriptures by those who have solemnly professed to believe and receive them, there is no surer way to disparage and depreciate the religion of Christ. To the Scriptures of the Old Testament the Saviour constantly appeals as the indubitable Word of God. His attestation should be conclusive. And the Ministry will only be respected and honored as it maintains the integrity and inspiration of the entire word of God. The Bible and the office stand or fall together; and we exalt the credit and influence of the office as we show Jesus Christ to be the Alpha and Omega of the holy volume, illuminating all its portions with his light and pervading all with his love.

3. We magnify our office by a ready and lively SYMPATHY WITH THE WANTS AND SUFFERINGS OF HUMANITY, by entering warmly into plans of practical benevolence and judicious charity, by withholding not our aid and countenance from measures that propose to enlighten the ignorant, elevate the sunken and succour the miserable. The promotion of education, the

relief of poverty and wretchedness, the soothing of pain and distress, the reclaiming of the erring, the shielding of youth from corrupt influences, the lifting up of the down-trodden and wronged ; these, and kindred objects, are eminently deserving of our interest and attention. Where the Church is strong in numbers and wealth, she can herself inaugurate and sustain benevolent institutions, and it is cause for devout thankfulness to witness the great increase of her zeal and liberality for such purposes in our large cities. A small and poor Diocese does not afford the means and opportunity for separate Church action. But there is abroad an awakened philanthropic spirit productive of measures of practical benevolence which appeal to all classes of the community. Such measures the ministers of Him who went about doing good, may well regard with favor and promote with cordial co-operation. As a class, the Ministry cannot do much by direct pecuniary aid. But it is often in their power to draw forth the assistance of those to whom God hath given means. Counsel and encouragement, active effort and direction are much needed. It is an honor to our office to be looked to for sanction and encouragement of such enterprises. And even where there are features in the plan that do not wholly commend themselves to our taste and judgment, is it not better to show our good-will, and

to do all that we may to secure the good and lessen the objection. It has been cheering to witness, even in the dreadful shock of arms, the new impulse given to kindly sympathy and self-denying charity. It has been one of the tokens that the Lord of hosts was with us that there has been such free out-pouring of treasure, such devotion of time and labor to the work of alleviating the inevitable suffering of warfare, and pouring the oil and wine of prompt succor and Christian consolation into deep bleeding wounds. God be thanked that the precious flowers of pity, humanity and loving-kindness have sprung up even on the crimsoned battle-field, and diffused their fragrance in the crowded hospital. The enlarged and effective sympathy thus called forth is an honor to our country, and cause for fervent gratitude to the Giver of every good gift. The spirit thus awakened, it is confidently hoped, will not evaporate with returning peace, but, as there will be constant and abundant occasion for its exercise, will continue to pervade and bless society. Let us bid God-speed to every work that breathes the spirit of Christ. So far as time and opportunity are afforded, let such enterprises have our countenance and aid. By an ungrudging co-operation in plans of improvement and mercy, a readiness to help and further whatever breathes good will to men, we shall not only promote the immediate

beneficial undertaking, but magnify our office. We aspire not to be leaders, we court no pre-eminence, we desire not to obtrude our services, we are willing to give way to others more efficient and capable ; but, where the door is open—where the call is made, where humanity is languishing, where misery is pleading, where the mortal may be succored or the immortal rescued and directed heaven-ward, there let our feet be swift, our tongue unloosed and our heart responsive and ready.

4. We magnify our office by the PLAIN, DIRECT, AND FAITHFUL ENFORCING OF DUTY AND CONDEMNATION OF SIN. Our commission is, “Preach the word ; be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.” To expose and rebuke sin is as much a part of our office as to set forth the promises and consolations of the faith. To exhibit the law of God is indispensable to the full presentation of the gospel of Christ. “By manifestation of the truth, we commend ourselves to every man’s conscience in the sight of God.” And the truth, which we are to commend to the conscience, is truth not abstract and speculative, but practical and searching. Our holy religion is not only for the closet, the Sabbath and the sanctuary, but a garment for daily wear, a constant rule and direction. It overshadows men in their homes, follows them to their business,

watches their hours of relaxation, regulates their social intercourse, and demands their fidelity in every public trust as well as private relation. The word of God is quick and powerful. Christian principle is exacting and comprehensive. It will not suffice merely to lay down truth in the general, to insist on certain fundamental doctrines which few question, or to recommend indefinitely and vaguely virtue and holiness. Persons become accustomed to stereotyped phrases and hear them without feeling, and too often without profit. There may be sad departures in the life and conduct, while every token of outward reverence is given to the articles of the Christian faith. To discharge ourselves of our responsibility as teachers of Christian morals and guides of the flock, we must aim to come close to the conscience, we must deal with living men, apprehend the dangers and demands of our own times, apply the truths and warnings of the Bible to the very world in which we dwell, and to the very people among whom our lot is cast. We should point out plainly to our hearers the sins to which they are exposed. We should enforce without hesitation the duties incumbent at the moment upon them. If at any particular juncture there are special temptations, we should be out-spoken concerning them. If the developments of divine Providence are peculiarly significant and solemn, our trumpet should

give no uncertain sound. If the awful voice of the Almighty shake the land, we should call men to hearken, and aim in humility and faith to interpret its teachings. We stand on our watch-tower, and seasons of upheaval and commotion should impel us to watch more closely and to warn more loudly.

In the exhibition of sins and duties are those to be omitted which pertain to men as citizens? In our expositions of the divine word are we to pass over those portions which regulate the duties of rulers and people, or refer to them only when they are not brought into dispute? Is a duty to be enforced only so long as none gainsay or oppose, and a crime denounced only when it is unknown or infrequent? If the duty be trampled upon by multitudes and the crime made a rallying-cry and boast, then are the lips of Christ's minister sealed? Is he to be deterred, by the clamor against the introduction of political topics, from reproving from the pulpit those offences against which he is constantly praying in the desk? Are we, in the discharge of our great office, to be mere echoes of the sentiments of our congregations, and to say nothing that can possibly be unpalatable? Ought the pastor from fear of giving offence to keep back any part of the counsel of God, and to deal tenderly with crimes that sap the foundations of the State and deluge half a continent with blood? I have not so

learned Christ, or derived such impressions from the Holy Scriptures. I find the Apostles as urgent and direct in enforcing duties of this class as any other. If obligations are to be estimated by the frightful magnitude of the evils that follow their violation, then civic obligations stand high in the scale. And the time when they are violated, is the very time when it is needful to warn most plainly and pointedly.

An honest, faithful, enlightened ministry is among the truest and safest guides of public opinion. Not mingling as partisans in the ordinary strifes of faction, they are less likely to be blinded by passion and perverted by prejudice and interest. The standard to which they bring questions is not supposed party gain and advantage, not popularity and expediency, but the oracles of God. In matters of mere secular policy, while as citizens they have a right to their own opinions, they are neither called by duty, nor as a general thing are they disposed to obtrude their sentiments. There has seldom been any difficulty arising from such source to disturb our parochial relations, or to prevent persons of opposite views from worshiping in harmony, and regarding their pastor with equal respect and confidence. But when great principles of religious obligation are involved, when truths plainly revealed in the Scriptures are openly set at naught, when sins condemned by the word of God and by the

articles of faith adopted by the Church of Christ are gloried in, then the whole question is changed. It is no longer one of political difference, but of morality and Christianity. No infraction of the divine law is to escape our censure. In the judgment of God no sin will be passed by because sanctioned by popular clamor or called by specious names. Men will be dealt with upon the great eternal principles of right and justice embodied in the divine word. Their responsibility will rise with their station and talents. The statesman must answer to God for his policy, the legislator for his laws, the judge for the exercise of his judicial office, the citizen for the measures he has sustained or opposed. There is no respect of persons. And while we disclaim the thought of instructing men on State questions as such, we are bound to show the bearing of the word of God upon public wrongs and civic duties.

It is alike clear from Scripture and from Providence that national sins bring after them national judgments. The public iniquity is followed at length by public calamity—calamity proportioned in its severity to the extent and aggravations of the offence. In such visitations the whole community is involved, the innocent suffer with the guilty, and the Church escapes not the general desolation. When the ministers of Christ observe the growing transgression and

apprehend the impending wrath, have they no duty to discharge ? Are they to be silenced by selfish demagogues who dread the light of truth ? Far different was the tenor of the command given to the prophets of old. “ Son of man, speak to the children of thy people, and say unto them, when I bring the sword upon a land, if the people of the land take a man of their coasts, and set him for their watchman : If when he see the sword come upon the land, he blow the trumpet and warn the people ; then whosoever heareth the sound of the trumpet, and taketh not warning ; if the sword come and take him away, his blood shall be upon his own head. But if the watchman see the sword come and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned ; if the sword come and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity ; but his blood will I require at the watchman’s hand. So thou, O son of man, I have set thee a watchman unto the house of Israel : therefore thou shalt hear the word at my mouth and warn them from me.” We have been wont to apply this solemn passage exclusively to the warning sinners of the eternal consequences of transgression ; and in that respect it is amazingly impressive. But, as originally given, it referred to the temporal judgments brought upon the land by public iniquities, and I know not why we are at liberty

to ignore this design, or to suppose it confined entirely to the prophet of old. God's hand is lifted up now as then to chastise guilty nations. And while private sins go to swell the aggregate and provoke the wrath, iniquities that are taken under national sanction, sustained by legislation and State policy as well as by public sentiment, are special causes of controversy between the Almighty and communities. And if we trace the course of sacred and secular history, we shall find no sins followed by more terrible judgments than the spoiling and oppression of the weak and defenceless. To grind the face of a poor and supposed inferior race has always been peculiarly offensive to the great Father of all, and his arm has been bared in signal vengeance for such infractions of the laws of equity, mercy and humanity. And especially are a people held to account for the deliberate sanction of injustice by legislative acts or judicial proceedings. "Ye shall do no unrighteousness in judgment; ye shall not respect persons in judgment; but ye shall hear the small as well as the great; ye shall not be afraid of the face of man, for the judgment is God's." If to secure the blessing of the Almighty upon our land, just laws and equal administration of justice are most important, we should remember that under our republican system a portion of this responsibility rests upon every citizen.

The choice of legislators and virtually of magistrates rests with the people. The same reason that impelled the prophets and apostles to deal faithfully with sovereigns and rulers, applies to our dealing with private citizens as well as with those in authority. And at no period and in no country was it so indispensable that the people generally be instructed in the great principles of right and justice as in our own. These obligations are religious as well as social. The Christian is to submit to the ordinance of legitimate government for the Lord's sake. He is accountable for measures to which he gives his sanction and influence. Since it is our aim to present every man perfect in Christ Jesus, can we omit altogether this important part of the great account ?

It is true that ministers are fallible and frail, men of like passions with their hearers. They may err in the views they adopt and in the counsels they give. But so may they also err as expositors of any other part of Christian duty, and in regard to great doctrines of the faith. This fallibility calls for very careful examination of their own hearts, diligent study of the Scriptures and fervent prayer. A vast responsibility rests upon those whose office it is to show unto men the way of salvation. We cannot evade this responsibility with safety to ourselves. The only safe course is to meet it fairly, trusting in

the grace of God and the guidance of His Spirit. And while men listen, not with blind unquestioning confidence, which we are very far from desiring, but with respect and docility, to our expositions of the great and solemn questions of acceptance with God and life eternal, we may reasonably ask like attention to every point of Christian obligation which we feel bound to present.

Times like these in which we have been living may well suggest to us the importance of reconsidering and investigating anew the opinions that have passed current respecting our appropriate duties. Have we been in the past sufficiently outspoken and faithful? Has not the fear of man been allowed too much to silence the testimony of the servant of God against public iniquity and injustice? Could unprincipled men desire anything more than to stifle the voice of the Christian pulpit, and reduce its occupants to be silent observers of wrong and wickedness, under the specious pretext of the unworldly and sacred nature of their functions?

I am far from wishing, my dear brethren, to dictate to any of you the themes you shall select for public discourse. You feel, I am persuaded, the grave and responsible character of your office. You know the condition and wants of your respective congregations. You are desirous to be at once faith-

ful and conciliating, to rebuke sin and to avoid unnecessary offence. You wish certainly to "follow the things which make for peace, and things where-with one may edify another." With no desire or intention to prescribe the course of others, I claim for the Ministry, of which I am a humble representative, the clear right to expound those parts of the word of God which relate to social obligations, and to show to the citizen, whatever position he may occupy, the conduct that becometh the gospel of Christ. I conceive that our office is to be magnified by using great plainness of speech, in exposing public as well as private iniquity. And the office may be as truly magnified when reproach and opposition are incurred in the maintenance of truth and righteousness, as by favor and acceptance. It is better to suffer odium and loss from conscience towards God, and in defence of high and holy principles, than to purchase a temporary popularity by compromise or silence. "The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable." To obtain permanent, settled respect for our office, there are no surer means than truthful fidelity, aiming not to please men, but to enlighten, reform and save them.

But when we consider our high and momentous commission in its various aspects and relations, meditate upon its connection with the work of Christ,

the glory of God, the peace, purity and welfare of society, the rebuke of sin, the exposure of error, the enlightening of the public mind, the quickening and informing of the public conscience, the promotion of brotherly kindness and holiness, the spread of that kingdom which is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost, and the everlasting salvation of men—how is the cry wrung from our inmost souls? “Who is sufficient for these things?” May the Lord sustain us under this heavy burden and help us to magnify our office both by our teaching and our lives. And when the Chief Shepherd shall appear may we receive the crown of glory that fadeth not away.

SAINT JOHN BAPTIST'S DAY.

THE COLLECT.

Almighty God, by whose providence thy servant John Baptist was wonderfully born, and sent to prepare the way of thy Son our Saviour, by preaching repentance; make us so to follow his doctrine and holy life, that we may truly repent according to his preaching; and after his example constantly speak the truth, boldly rebuke vice, and patiently suffer for the truth's sake, through Jesus Christ our Lord. AMEN.